

First confirmed record of Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* for São Tomé and Príncipe

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Première observation confirmée du Crabier chevelu *Ardeola ralloides* pour São Tomé et Príncipe. Le 2 juillet 2012, un Crabier chevelu *Ardeola ralloides* a été photographié sur l'estuaire de la rivière Papagaio, à Santo Antonio, Príncipe. Il s'agit de la première mention confirmée de l'espèce pour São Tomé et Príncipe.

On 2 July 2012, I noticed a medium-sized heron on the mudflats of the Papagaio estuary, Santo Antonio, Príncipe (01°38'26"N 07°25'30"E). The bird remained not far from the shoreline for c.5 minutes before flying off east along the south side of Santo Antonio Bay. The head, hindneck, back, flanks and upper belly were streaked tawny. The throat was white, as were the wings, although partially concealed by the back plumes when perched. The relatively stout bill was pale green-yellow with a hint of a black tip (Fig. 1). The distance did not permit me to distinguish the colour of the eyes or the lores. In flight, the bird had a white rump and a relatively short white tail (Fig. 2). I identified it as a Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*. Owing to the poor quality of the images, its age can only be hypothesised as a first-year.

This is the first confirmed record of Squacco Heron for the Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe. In January 1996 an immature was reported from the same area (Christy & Clarke 1998). However, due to the slight possibility of the occurrence of other *Ardeola* as vagrants, the record was considered as provisional (Jones & Tye 2006) and the species was not included in the most recent checklist of the island (Dowsett *et al.* 2016a). There are no records from São Tomé or Annobón

(Jones & Tye 2006, Dowsett *et al.* 2016b), but it is possibly a vagrant to Bioko (Dowsett *et al.* 2016c).

Squacco Heron is resident and reasonably common over most of sub-Saharan Africa, while in August–November there is an influx of birds from the Palearctic (Kushlan & Hancock 2005). It frequents a wide range of shallow freshwater habitats, although the species is known to visit brackish and coastal waters on migration or dispersal (Martínez-Vilalta & Motis 1992, Kushlan & Hancock 2005). Such movements produce frequent records of vagrants, e.g. in Seychelles (Tiatousse *et al.* 2005), on St. Helena (Hillman *et al.* 2014), the Cape Verdes, Azores, Madeira and the Canaries (Borrow & Demey 2001, Kushlan & Hancock 2005). The most striking instance involves repeated recent sightings on the Fernando de Noronha archipelago, just c.350 km off the Brazilian coast, which are thought to be a possible prelude to the foundation of a local population (Silva e Silva & Olmos 2006, Davis 2010). The island of Príncipe is separated from the African mainland by c.220 km. This is a relatively small distance compared to other vagrancy records.

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Figures 1–2. Squacco Heron / Crabier chevelu *Ardeola ralloides*, Papagaio estuary, Santo Antonio, Príncipe, 2 July 2012 (Simon Valle)

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